

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TAGS: PFOR, OAS

SUBJECT: FONSEC RABASA DISPARAGES OAS IN SESSION WITH
SENATORS.

1. SUMMARY: IN BREAKFAST SESSION WITH SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERS, FONSEC CRITICIZED OAS AND RIO TREATY IN SHARPEST TERMS TO DATE, ADDING THAT IF "DRASTIC REFORM" IS NOT ACHIEVED MEXICO SHOULD SERIOUSLY CONTEMPLATE WITHDRAWING FROM SYSTEM. NONETHELESS, RABASA SAID, MEXICO BELIEVES THAT SYSTEM--DESPITE ITS DEFECTS--SHOULD BE PRESERVED AND RADICALLY TRANSFORMED, AND MEXICO CONTINUES PRESSING FOR SUCH REFORM. END SUMMARY.

2. IN A RARE, ON-THE-RECORD BREAKFAST MEETING WITH SENATORS YESTERDAY, TO WHICH FONSEC HAD BEEN INVITED TO DISCUSS SEVERAL CURRENT TOPICS IN MEXICO'S FOREIGN RELATIONS (QUITO OUTCOME, BREAK WITH CHILE, CERDS, ETC.), RABASA DIRECTED HIS HEAVIEST CRITICISM TO DATE AT OAS AND RIO TREATY. RABASA'S HARSH WORDS, PARTICULARLY HIS SUGGESTION THAT MEXICO MIGHT PULL OUT IF INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS WERE NOT RADICALLY ALTERED, GOT HEADLINES IN MEXICO CITY PRESS. AS USUAL, HIS QUALIFICATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS WERE BURIED ON INSIDE PAGES.

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3. TAKING OFF FROM LAMENT OVER QUITO MFM "FAILURE",

RABASA DESCRIBED RIO TREATY PROVISIONS WHICH GOVERNED THAT MEETING AS "OBSOLETE, ABSURD, AND ANTIDEMOCRATIC". MEXICO WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN SEEING RIO TREATY REFORMED, HE SAID, BECAUSE IT HAD WITNESSED REPEATED INSTANCES IN WHICH FREE DEMOCRATIC EXPRESSION OF THE WILL OF MEMBER STATES HAD BEEN FRUSTRATED BY "PREDOMINANT HEGEMONIES" WITHIN THE SYSTEM. MEXICO WAS URGING REFORMS WHICH WOULD TRANSFER RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEALING WITH CONFLICTS WITHIN THE HEMISPHERE TO U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL, THUS FREEING MEMBERS FROM WHAT SOME FEEL IS A "REGIONAL JAIL". MEXICO ALSO SOUGHT A MORE REALISTIC DEFINITION OF THE GEOGRAPHIC ZONE COVERED BY THE TREATY'S PROVISIONS.

4. PROMPTED BY A PRI SENATOR WHO ASSERTED THAT OAS ITSELF WAS PRACTICALLY MORIBUND AND NO LONGER REPRESENTED INTERESTS OF A MAJORITY OF ITS MEMBERS, RABASA AGREED THAT DRASTIC RECONSTRUCTING WAS NEEDED THERE TOO. PRESENT "HUGE, COSTLY, AND OFTEN USELESS BUREACRACY" NEEDED DOING AWAY WITH; AUTHORITY AND DUTIES OF OAS SECGEN NEEDED REDEFINING; AND CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO FUSING CIES AND CIECC FUNCTIONS IN A SINGLE BODY. (IN THIS CONNECTION, RABASA ALSO MENTIONED MEXICAN-VENEZUELAN PROPOSAL TO CREATE AN INDEPENDENT LATIN AMERICAN ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION, NOTING THAT CIES HAD FAILED TO ACHIEVE ITS ECONOMIC PURPOSES.)

5. YET ANOTHER SENATOR ASKED WHY MEXICO DIDN'T SIMPLY PULL OUT OF OAS AND GET ON WITH FORMING A STRICTLY LATIN AMERICAN ASSEMBLY. RABASA REPLIED THAT, "NOTWITHSTANDING ITS DEFECTS, WE BELIEVE THAT OAS--CHANGED, REVOLUTIONIZED-- SHOULD CONTINUE TO EXIST." BUT ASKED BY NEWSMEN AFTERWARD WHETHER MEXICO WOULD CONTINUE TO BELONG IF OAS REMAINED UNREGENERATED AND INEFFECTIVE, RABASA SAID THAT UNLESS VERY DRASTIC CHANGES WERE MADE MEXICO WOULD HAVE TO CONSIDER "VERY SERIOUSLY" THE POSSIBILITY OF WITHDRAWING.

6. COMMENT: THE PUBLIC SESSION WITH SENATORS--A RARE AND PERHAPS UNPRECEDENTED APPEARANCE FOR RABASA--WAS CLEARLY A SET PIECE DESIGNED TO ALLOW HIM TO "TESTIFY" FOR GOM ON RECENT TURNS IN MEXICAN FOREIGN POLICY. FOLLOWING BY ONLY 24 HOURS A VERY LENGTHY CONSULTATION WITH PRES. ECHEVERRIA LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ON THESE TOPICS, RABASA'S REMARKS HAD TO BE GIVEN EXTRA WEIGHT. DOUBTLESS THE FONSEC'S MORE VITRIOLIC LANGUAGE WAS DUE TO PRESIDENTIAL INFLUENCE; YET, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, SO MUST HAVE BEEN HIS LESS LURID COMMENTS WHICH ESSENTIALLY REAFFIRMED PREVIOUS MEXICAN POLICY TOWARD THE OAS AND RIO TREATY--I.E., FUNDAMENTAL REFORMS ARE NEEDED, MEXICO IS PRESSING FOR SUCH REFORMS, BUT THE SYSTEM AS SUCH SHOULD CONTINUE TO EXIST.

7. RABASA'S HEADLINED "THREAT" THAT MEXICO MIGHT ABANDON
EITHER RIO TREATY OR OAS PROPER, AND HIS RENEWED REFERENCE
TO THE POSSIBLE FORMATION OF AN INDEPENDENT LATIN ECONOMIC
FORUM, SHOULD THEREFORE BE VIEWED IN CONTEXT OF MEXICO'S
ESTABLISHED REFORM-OR-PERISH POLICY: MEXICO STILL
WANTS TO SALVAGE THE SYSTEM, BUT IN THE WAKE OF QUITO IT IS
MORE DETERMINED THAN EVER TO SEE IT FUNDAMENTALLY
RESTRUCTURED, AND IT IS NOT ABOVE THE USE OF A LITTLE BLACK-
MAIL TO GET ITS WAY.
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